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## Go Global, Connecticut

### **INTERNATIONAL READINESS • State must prepare students for world economy**

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If there is a silver lining to the cloud of economic gloom in Connecticut, it's our export numbers. Last year, 4,636 Connecticut companies exported \$15.3 billion in goods and commodities, according to the World Institute for Strategic Economic Research. The total is an increase of more than 40 percent since 2005.

Export activity accounts for more than 7 percent of the state's economy and supports 30 percent of our manufacturing jobs. Engagement in the global economy has also led to more foreign investment in Connecticut; subsidiaries of foreign companies account for nearly 105,000 jobs here.

So if the global economy is where the growth is, shouldn't we be increasing our presence?

The state does well on the business level: The Department of Economic and Community Development and business groups aggressively go after international trade. But according to educators and other participants in a recent World Affairs Council program on international readiness, we aren't preparing our young people for the global economy, at least on a consistent basis.

For example, foreign language instruction is offered at differing levels of intensity across the state and is often one of the first victims of budget cuts. The world language requirement was recently dropped from the state's proposed high school reform standards and is now an elective.

Also, some state college scholarships do not allow recipients to study abroad. Why not?

Simsbury Superintendent Diane Ullman said Connecticut needs a "a state strategy, a plan for international readiness." She's right. It should include not only K-12 language instruction and foreign study, but training teachers to teach the international aspects of their subjects and measuring our educational standards against those of other countries.

Many of the financial service jobs that brought waves of cash into the state are gone. We need to replace those jobs. If the future is the increasingly flattening world, we would be remiss in not preparing our students for it.

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